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REMINISCENCES OF A TRANS-ATLANTIC TRAVELLER.*

This is rather a sketchy production. Several of the sketches are, however, tolerably well touched off; and will, we should think, be considered interesting by many about to make a trans-atlantic excursion. The following extracts, taken without any reference to connection, convey as favourable an impression of the work as it really merits :—

NEW YORK.

"New York is perhaps one of the gayest and most dissipated cities in the universe, and presents a thousand temptations to a foreigner, particularly a young one, to engage in expense and extravagance. Accordingly, I found that my remittances from Europe disappeared almost as fast as they arrived; the theatre, balls, masquerades, and sleigh-riding, cigars, gin, sling, and mint julap, served in a very able manner to drain my purse. Of all the amusements of the Americans, sleigh-riding is the greatest favourite amongst the young citizens. So soon as the ground is sufficiently covered with snow, the roads are thronged with sleighs of every size and description, from the rude one-horse vehicle of the homely farmer to the splendid chariot of the wealthy trader drawn by four noble horses with splendid trappings and bells. Night is the favourite time for travelling when on an excursion of pleasure, and this is really delightful, when the moon is visible, shedding its pale silvery light over an immense tract of snow. When a sleigh excursion is determined on by any young citizens, they invite a number of pretty girls to accompany them, (which favour is rarely denied,) they then start off, late in the evening, and sometimes will make an excursion of forty or fifty miles before morning, stopping at every tavern on their route, in which they procure a supply of hot Irish whiskey punch, (a great favourite,) dance, and sometimes cut the most antic capers, not unfrequently arousing the inmates of the house, travellers, boarders, and every person they can lay hands on to join in the dance; this is rarely complained of, as sleigh-riders are a privileged class, and the tavern keepers (finding them excellent customers) rarely thwart their humours. To guard against the severity of the frost, the parties are always well muffled with cloaks, coats, buffalo and bear skins; the ladies having portable stoves, lit with charcoal, to keep their feet warm."

AMERICAN FEMALES.

"The American females rank high in the scale of beauty; and next to my own fair countrywomen, I would certainly give them the preference; there is a peculiar naivete about them which renders them extremely interesting, their figures are tall and elegant, their step light and graceful, and their countenances inclining more to the Asiatic than European caste, being very pale, faintly tinged with a roseate hue: their beauty, however, declines much sooner than that of Europeans, and they are very liable to consumption; in the south it is quite common for females to become bald before thirty."

MEN IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

"The southerners are haughty and vindictive, and form a great contrast to the cool calculating Yankee. Parties of half a dozen young men will sometimes fight with rifles; and those meetings are generally fatal to most of the combatants.

"Gouging is a favourite system of warfare in the south, particularly in Kentucky. In tavern brawls, should any party quarrel, the first object is to attack the eyes, into the sockets of which they endeavour to get their thumbs, and gouge or pluck them out; and it sometimes occurs, that some of these fellows carry off whole pockets full of eyes in triumph. The only punishment is, that if any of the party should be rendered wholly eyeless, and thereby deprived of the means of subsistence, the aggressor must make an allowance for his support."

FALLS OF NIAGARA.

"On the morning after my arrival at Queens-town, I proceeded to view the stupendous Cataract of Niagara, of which so much has been said and written. It is impossible for the imagination to conjure up a more magnificent scene. The spray is visible at a distance of five or six miles, ascending to the clouds in an immense body beautifully sparkling in the sunbeams. On approaching the Falls, the loud roar of the water in descending is deafening. The woods extend close to the banks of the river, and it is impossible to see the Falls until within a few yards of them. Emerging from the forest, the scene which suddenly strikes the beholder is truly grand. I advanced to a projecting cliff, and for some moments was lost in astonishment at the magnificent sight before me—

'A matchless cataract, horribly beautiful.'

"The Falls are divided in two curvetures, separated from each other by a large rock, called Goat Island, which is covered with trees. This rock might more truly be styled the 'Isle of tears,' or 'The Region of Mist,' for it is continually encircled with spray, the heavy fall of which soon forces the beholder to a hasty retreat. The curve on the American side is upwards of seventeen hundred, and that on the Canadian exceeding two thousand feet. The height of the Falls is one hundred and forty-nine; and the breadth of the river eleven hundred. I heard the noise at Queenstown, seven miles distance, when the wind was light, and coming direct from them; I have seen it stated in some publications, that they could be heard fourteen miles, and some go so far as forty; but such is not the case, unless with the assistance of an ear trumpet of very considerable dimensions. I could not hear them a mile below Queenstown, and fancy that my organs of hearing are as acute as those of most persons.

"There are a number of fine farms in this neighbourhood, cleared land, averaging about twenty-five dollars per acre. And numbers of capitalists have lately settled here, invited by the beauty of the scenery, and the contiguity of the Falls. Within three miles of Niagara, is Lundy's Lane, where a battle was fought between the Americans and British; and at Queenstown was fought the celebrated battle of Queenstown heights, where General Brock was killed, to whose memory a handsome monument has been erected. Queenstown is a very inconsiderable place. On the opposite bank of the river is a handsome American village called Lewistown."

RIVER ST. LAWRENCE.

"In three hours after leaving Niagara, I arrived at York, the capital of the province of Upper Canada. Making a stay of two or three hours here, I went on board a steamer bound for Prescott on the St. Lawrence. Lake Ontario presents an appearance similar to Erie, being about the same extent, and, like it, studded with numerous and beautiful islands. Kingston, at which we touched, is a considerable town, and has a very extensive navy yard. The Rideau canal runs between this and Montreal, to avoid the interruption in the navigation of that part of the immense chain of water communication which assumes the name of the St. Lawrence, by means of the Rapids. From Kingston I proceeded to Prescott, (seventy miles,) down the St. Lawrence. As this is one of the largest, so it is one of the most beautiful of the American rivers; of immense width, it is covered with innumerable islands, each of which is separated by a broad and rapid stream, and each outvying the other in beauty and verdure. This portion of the river is very truly styled 'The thousand Isles,' each of which in itself would form a paradise. Touching at Brockville, a neat little village, we arrived at Prescott, a tolerable town, but far exceeded by Ogdensburg, on the American side of the river. Here I cannot avoid drawing a contrast between the towns of Canada and those of the United States; the latter possessing all the bustle of enterprise and commerce, well and tastefully built, and elegant in their appearance, whilst the former present a heavy and dull appearance, are badly built, filthy in the extreme, and having little or no trade, except in the transmigration of poor emigrants. The St. Lawrence, from Montreal to its exit into the gulf, presents a noble appearance, being on an average three miles wide. The

* Reminiscences of a Trans-atlantic Traveller, being a Sketch of Fourteen Months' Residence in North America, in the years 1831-32. By W. T. M. Dublin: W. F. Wakeman.

current is so great, that vessels have to be towed by steamers up to Montreal. I have frequently seen three vessels, of from three to four hundred tons, towed by one steamer."

THE RAPIDS.

"The Rapids commence about thirty miles below Prescott, and extend nearly to Montreal. The principal of them are the Gallooz, near Prescott; the Long Saut, or Long Rapid, extending eight or nine miles, near Cornwall; the Coteau Lac, at the end of Lake St. Francis; the Cascades, and La Chine, near Montreal.

"The sensation felt coming down these Rapids is delightful; the light fanning breeze between each, assisted by the strong current, wafted us along at the rate of five miles an hour; occasionally the men took to their oars, to keep clear of any dangerous shoals; then arose the hoarse boat glee, in Canadian French, which, united to the half-savage appearance of the boatmen, and the wildness of the scenery around, had a most romantic effect; and when we entered a rapid, the battoo darted forward with the rapidity of lightning to its termination.

"A number of islands in the neighbourhood of the Rapids are inhabited by Indians, who receive very considerable sums of money for piloting the rafts or drams of timber which come from the head of Lake Ontario, during the spring and fall."

MONTREAL.

"Montreal is a good town, but there is nothing in it worthy of admiration. The houses of the respectable inhabitants are built of stone, and very much resemble prisons in appearance, having sheet iron doors and window-shutters. The tin roofing, however, gives the town a very imposing appearance at a distance. The dwellings of the poorer classes are of wood, and are tolerably neat. It contains a population of thirty thousand, principally French Canadians."

FRENCH CANADIAN PEASANTS.

"The banks of the St. Lawrence are thickly settled from Montreal to Quebec by French Canadians. At the distance of every nine miles, there is a handsome village and chapel; the inhabitants are poor, but remarkably neat; and their whitewashed cottages look extremely well. The French in Montreal, who are engaged in boating, rafting, &c. are a cunning, drunken, disorderly race of men, as are persons of the same class in every society. But the French Canadian peasant, or artizan, is frugal, sober, and harmless, and attached to his family. Their countenances are grave and thoughtful, and wholly free from that vivacity and animation for which the European French are so celebrated. They are a handsome race of people, having good features, dark olive complexions, and brilliant black eyes. The females wear a stuff petticoat, over which is a short cotton frock, barely reaching the knee, and a round straw hat. This I found to be their costume from the mouth of the Thames to Quebec."

QUEBEC.

"The approach to Quebec is through a number of beautiful coves; the land on each side is very high, particularly on the side of the town, where are the celebrated heights of Abraham, the scene of Wolfe's glory and death. Quebec is an irregular and inelegantly built town, containing a population of about twenty-seven thousand; it is remarkable for being one of the strongest fortifications in the world, and is built on a steep hill, round the base of which is a narrow, filthy street, upwards of three miles in length, inhabited by the poorest class of Irish. Here they have their Wexford and Wicklow taverns, their signs of St. Patrick, &c.

"Since Quebec fell into the hands of the British in 1759, it has been rendered almost impregnable from the river side, and the fortifications have been nearly all rebuilt. It commands a most imposing position on a curve of the St. Lawrence, and any approach from the sea is rendered almost impossible, whilst the immense height of the banks of the river, which are almost perpendicular, would render an attack descending the river fruitless, were the heights sufficiently guarded by redoubts. But there is

nothing to prevent an enemy's gaining the heights above the town, and with an army entrenched on the plains, the principal difficulty would be surmounted."

COMFORTS OF A VOYAGE.

"The chief who ruled the fore-castle on board our vessel was an Irishman, as were most of the crew; he was a remarkable fine looking fellow, about six and twenty, of Herculean frame, possessed rather handsome features, was open-hearted and generous, but violently passionate, and jealous of his authority. There was a fiddler on board, and every fine evening the steerage passengers assembled on the quarter-deck to dance. Amongst these no one was more gay than O'Brien, or danced with better grace. He was admired and dreaded by all on board, and even the captain was obliged to conciliate him. The crew were divided into two gangs, called the starboard and larboard watches, one commanded by the first, the other by the second mate. These worked the vessel, alternately, every four hours.

"We had just cleared the foggy banks of Newfoundland, and the first and second mates having taken an observation of the sun, which had not been visible for several days, the latter retired to the fore-castle, his watch being below; O'Brien was one of his party, and was giving vent to his passion, occasioned by some orders of the captain, which he considered infringing on the rights of his community. The mate justified the captain's conduct—an angry colloquy ensued, which ended in O'Brien's knocking the mate down. The fore-castle became a scene of confusion, during which the mate made his escape on deck, but was quickly followed by O'Brien, foaming with rage. The captain was standing on the quarter-deck, and seeing the conflict between his mate and O'Brien, sprang forward, and seized the latter by the neck-cloth, which he twisted, and rendered O'Brien powerless—his face became black—his tongue hung out—and in a few minutes he would have been strangled, when one of the sailors cut his neck-cloth from behind. Freed from the deadly grasp, O'Brien knocked the captain down, and seizing a large oak stave, levelled it at his head. The crew remained passive spectators of the scene—another moment would have terminated the existence of the captain, when O'Reilly sprang forward, and pinioned O'Brien's arms behind. The stave fell from his hand—the captain retreated to the cabin, and O'Brien was conveyed by his messmates to the fore-castle.

"A few hours afterwards, I was seated reading near the companion-way: the captain was leaning over the bulwarks of the quarter-deck. The evening being very fine, the crew and most of the passengers were collected in different groups on deck, and the vessel was proceeding steadily before a favourable breeze. O'Brien had remained below in sullen silence since the conflict, when reflection convinced him of the errors of his conduct, and his better feelings acquired the mastery of his passion. He came on deck; and all were surprised to see him approach the quarter-deck, with folded arms, and his countenance exhibiting evident symptoms of remorse. The quarter-deck being elevated about two feet above the main-deck, was ascended by a step-ladder. To the foot of this O'Brien approached, a tear starting in his eye, and his manly countenance struggling with remorse and pride. His shirt was open, and displayed his finely formed throat and chest, and his muscular arms, as they were folded across the latter, were bared nearly to his brawny shoulders.

"It was a noble sight to behold a man, who, but a few hours before, was like a raging lion, stand thus self-convinced. 'Captain H—,' he exclaimed—the latter turned round, and O'Brien proceeded—'Captain I have done wrong—I fear no man—no, hang me, if I do; but I feel that I have been guilty, and I ask your pardon.' This frank and manly appeal could not be resisted, and the captain extended him his hand. Tranquillity being restored, the remainder of the voyage was favourable; and on the 6th of October, I was safely landed on Kingstown pier, after a passage of twenty-eight days."

Having thus fairly introduced Mr. W. T. M. we now leave him to his fortunes, assured that if the volume does not make way with the public, it will not be in consequence of the extracts we have given.